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LIVE FACTORS IN LATIN TEACHING

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All devices which tend to instil interest in the private and public life of the Romans, and which encourage collateral reading in the history, mythology, and antiquities of the classic past, constitute a valuable asset in the teaching of high-school Latin. The use of illustrative material—such as models, prints, coins, lantern slides, Latin plays, etc.—is justified in the vital reaction upon the study of the texts through what the Germans call *Realien*. The laboratory method of teaching Roman antiquities in high school, however, has its limitations and dangers. In the first place, the student should be encouraged, as far as possible, to make his own illustrative material: this implies leisure for collateral reading and research. In the second place, a knowledge of history and antiquities is merely subsidiary: the main object in the study of Latin is to acquire a mastery of the language *per se* as a medium for classical culture, as well as to furnish a basis for formal linguistic training in English. It is well, therefore, at the outset to state that all instruction in the art, literature, and archaeology of the Romans must be largely incidental. In our attempt to vivify the classics, we must never lose sight of the fact that there is no royal road to a knowledge of declensions and the technique of language. Hard, incessant drill on forms and vocabulary is essential. No method has ever been advanced by an enthusiastic faddist which will remove the necessity for constant, systematic drill on paradigms and syntax in the first two years. If, however, anything can be done meanwhile to arouse enthusiasm in “gerund-grinding” and excite interest in the language as the vehicle of ancient life and thought, it behooves the teacher to consider the propriety of such aid. It is our purpose to attempt a brief résumé of methods of humanizing the study of Latin in secondary schools.

First of all, we must frankly admit that subjective stimuli, inherent in the subject-matter of the text and the linguistic method

of the teacher, are vastly more important than objective stimuli, which are at best only artificial and suggestive.¹ The teacher must be a living force in the classroom. The best teaching is always incidental. The teacher of Latin should possess *Sprachgefühl* and be imbued with enthusiasm for the classics, which will come solely from extensive reading in the Latin authors. This is a prerequisite for an intelligent survey of the Latin field. Every teacher should do considerable professional reading every year; he must know Latin first-hand and cultivate ability to read it fluently and accurately before he can become its inspired apostle, imbued with its spirit and power.

The scientific spirit that pervades modern education is in itself the best guaranty that no really vital subject will ever be dropped from the curriculum. The status of Latin is therefore largely dependent upon its correlation with modern interests, as well as its value as a disciplinary agent. Concrete results must be sought and our teaching vitalized at every point. The laboratory method implies research and emphasizes practical results in Latin teaching. If in common parlance Latin is a "dead" language, we should strive to show that it lives in the living English of today. Introduce the notebook method for vocabulary drill. Lodge's *Vocabulary of High School Latin* will serve as a source-book. Prepare typewritten lists of the five hundred words used most frequently by each author. Place the same in the hands of the student with instructions to rule the pages in columns for the following data: the word and its principal parts (if a verb), or genitive singular (if a noun or adjective), gender, meaning, and English derivative (if any). Inasmuch as only the first form of the word is given by the teacher, the student is forced to consult his vocabulary or a large lexicon for the required information; this, combined with the mechanical act of tabulating his material, causes him to react sufficiently upon each word to retain a comparatively vivid impression of it. The most vital part of this scheme is the prominence given to the English derivative, which tests the student's vocabulary and initiates him into the mystery of analysis and the perennial charm of word lore.

¹ Cf. E. Riess, "Natural and Artificial Stimuli in Teaching Latin," Proceedings of the National Education Association, 1910.

It has been found advisable to hold occasional word contests based upon the vocabulary notebooks, conducted upon the order of an old-time "spelling-bee." Much enthusiasm can thus be aroused if the various divisions of the same class are placed in competition and the element of class rivalry is injected into the work. The writer uses a score board properly ruled, showing in columns the number of words missed daily by the respective divisions during the contest. One division achieved the enviable record of having missed only two words out of five hundred, while two other divisions were close rivals for a perfect score. A definite number of words should be assigned in advance each day for study and the same list dictated to each division. Two weeks should suffice for such a contest, requiring only a few minutes daily: the return in enthusiasm and zeal for Latin words and their English derivatives will pay compound interest upon the investment. At this point, in company with a writer in the *Classical Weekly*, we wish to sound a note of warning, to wit: "dead words do not a language make nor printed lists a page." The pupil must regard word lists as a means only, a systematic way to gather and fix knowledge which is useful only when applied to the living page.

An article which proposes to discuss ways to vitalize the teaching of Latin cannot ignore the claims of the viva voce method, by which Latin is taught essentially as a modern language. Some of the standard beginners' books contain Colloquia for formal conversation in class. The serious objection to question-and-answer exercises of this sort is that they readily degenerate into mechanical and monotonous repetitions, without extending the scope of the student's syntactical knowledge. The solution, as in the case of all artificial devices or stimuli, depends in the last analysis upon the personality and resourcefulness of the teacher. He should possess a certain fluency as well as a generous store of Latin phrases and colloquial or stereotyped expressions, so that confidence and versatility of ideas may result. Any student can readily learn the technical expressions and the mechanics of ordinary classroom conversation, so that the viva voce method may be pursued for routine grammatical drill. But we maintain that colloquial exercises of this sort should subserve a higher purpose;

they should vitalize and enliven a recitation by affording an opportunity for the introduction of modern ideas and the more simple experiences of everyday life, clothed in sprightly and idiomatic Latin. We must strive to make our students feel that the Romans were intensely *human* and that, like us, they expressed their hopes, their fears, their joys, their sorrows in plain, straightforward speech—far removed from the involved, periodic style of the orator or historian.¹ Conversations of this kind, dealing with everyday experiences, tend more than anything else to dispel the opinion, current among students, that Latin is highly artificial and utterly incapable of expressing up-to-date ideas.

Every Latin room should contain a small collection of Roman coins—either originals or electrotypes—books of photographic prints, portrait busts of the classic authors, lantern slides, and a select library of standard books on classical subjects. A small collection of Roman coins representing the authors read in high school may be purchased at nominal cost. The historic significance of such a collection is at once apparent; students feel a thrill of real interest when permitted to handle these coins, much worn by contemporaries of Caesar, Cicero, and Vergil.²

Among other vitalizing agencies that stimulate interest, and throw, as it were, sidelights upon classic life, may be mentioned student models of Roman engines of war, such as the tormenta, gladius, pilum, and scutum; Caesar's bridge; Latin luncheons, entertainments, games, Latin plays, talks on classical pictures in the classroom and halls, classical clubs, Latin music, the Roman state, studies in local architecture exemplifying classic ideas, and *ad infinitum*.³ The students in the Latin department should be encouraged to establish the nucleus for a small but growing collection of models for the illustration of the classics. The lantern, long regarded as an indispensable adjunct in the science laboratory,

¹ Cf. Georg Capellanus, *Sprechen Sie Lateinisch? Moderne Konversation in Lateinischer Sprache*. Leipzig. M. 2.

² For five dollars the writer bought a series of four genuine coins as follows: a *quinarius* coined by M. Cato in 101 B.C.; a beautiful *denarius* minted by Caesar in 50 B.C.; an *as* and a *quadrans* in circulation in Vergil's day (ca. 15 B.C.).

³ Cf. *The Classical Weekly* and the *Classical Journal* for detailed accounts of the above methods of arousing interest in Roman life. The *Classical Journal* from the beginning has given space for the publication of notices of all school activities which have as their aim the correlation of the classics and the students' daily interests.

is now being utilized everywhere with gratifying results. The writer has adopted the practice of giving a series of after-school stereopticon "readings" on Latin subjects, which have met with unusual success. Attendance is always made optional. Much information can thus be given on collateral subjects—art, literature, and antiquities—which could never find legitimate place in the recitation. Students have been stimulated to read, and the public and the school libraries have been called upon to supply the demand for supplementary books. The following is a list of recent lectures:

1. Vergil and the *Aeneid*, illustrated with forty lantern slides.
2. The Importance of Latin and Its Correlation with Other High-School Subjects.
3. The Development of Greek and Roman Art, illustrated with fourteen charts and numerous prints and pictures.
4. The Influence of the Classics in the Renaissance.
5. Caesar and His Gallic Campaigns, illustrated with eighty lantern slides.
6. Pompeii, illustrated with forty-two slides.

After a cursory survey of various devices to humanize the classics, it remains to be said that the most fruitful source of inspiration for the teacher comes from a sojourn in classic lands. Nothing is so illuminating as actual contact with the modern representatives of the Greeks and Romans, amid the scenes immortalized in classic prose and verse. Under the mystic spell of the Acropolis and the Forum, we feel anew the "glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome." We can visualize and help our students see more clearly the setting of events if we ourselves have actually visited the scenes described. Nothing broadens one's mental horizon so much as travel. The German government has recognized the educative value of travel and has provided *Reize Stipendien* for teachers in the *Gymnasia*. Modern exploration and excavation in Italy and Greece—notably at Pompeii and Mycenae—have thrown new light upon the classic past and have caused an influx of new evidence that has recreated the ancient world. One cannot be wholly ignorant of topography and local color and thoroughly understand the temperament of a people. A summer vacation spent amid the classic scenes of Italy and Greece will leave a vital impress upon the teacher and enkindle a wise enthusiasm that will be a potent and vitalizing force in the classroom.